

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BLM, BOISE DISTRICT**

EA #ID-110-2008-EA-333 Title Page

Applicant (if any): BLM Action	Proposed Action: Northwest Pipeline Cathodic Protection Stations RoWs			EA No. ID-110-2008-EA-333
State: Idaho	County: Ada, Elmore	District: Boise	Field Office: Four Rivers	Authority: NEPA, Mineral Leasing Act
Prepared By: FRFO ID Team	Title: Northwest Pipeline Corporation Cathodic Protection Stations.			Report Date: 9/3/2008

LANDS INVOLVED

Meridian	Township	Range	Sections	Acres
Boise	2N	1E	25	0.47
Boise	1N	2E	13	2.56
Boise	5S	8E	4	0.41
Boise	2S	6E	33	0.52

<u>Consideration of Critical Elements</u>	N/A or Not Present	Applicable or Present, No Impact	Discussed in EA
Air Quality		X	
Areas of Critical Environmental Concern			X
Cultural Resources	X		
Environmental Justice (E.O. 12898)			
Farm Lands (prime or unique)	X		
Floodplains	X		
Migratory Birds		X	
Native American Religious Concerns	X		
Invasive, Nonnative Species			X
Wastes, Hazardous or Solid		X	
Threatened or Endangered Species			X
Social and Economic	X		
Water Quality (Drinking/Ground)	X		
Wetlands/Riparian Zones	X		
Wild and Scenic Rivers (Eligible)	X		
Wilderness Study Areas	X		

1.0 Introduction

Northwest Pipeline Corporation (NPC) operates a buried natural gas pipeline that crosses the Four Rivers Field Office. It has been in operation since the 1950s. The pipeline is protected from corrosion by a coating on the pipe as well as by cathodic protection stations (CPS) which use buried electrified anodes connected to the pipeline. Over time it becomes necessary to upgrade existing and or add additional CPS in order to maintain the integrity of the pipe.

1.1 Need for and Purpose of Action

NPC conducts regular inspections and testing of its pipeline and can determine where the pipe is not meeting Department of Transportation standards for corrosion protection. As a result of this testing NPC has determined that it needs to expand two existing CPS (IDI-14476, IDI-31008) and to add two new CPS (IDI-35880, IDI-35881) to provide the required protection.

1.2 Summary of Proposed Action

Right-of-ways would be granted to allow NPC to extend two existing CPS and to add two new CPS along with a powerline. Stipulations would be attached to the grants that make the holder responsible for rehabilitation of the right-of-ways, including revegetation and weed control measures.

1.3 Location and Setting

All of the proposed activities would take place adjacent to the existing highly disturbed pipeline corridor (Maps 1-4). IDI-31008 is approximately 10 miles southwest of Boise. IDI-35880 is approximately 13 miles south of Boise. IDI-14476 is approximately 6 miles northwest of Mountain Home. IDI-35881 is approximately 12 miles southeast of Mountain Home. Three of the sites had a ground cover of mixed grasses while the site covered by IDI-31008 was predominately sagebrush with grasses intermixed.

1.4 Conformance with Applicable Land Use Plan

The affected areas are covered by the Bruneau-Kuna Management Framework Plan (1983). The proposed action would be in conformance with the LUP, even though it is not specifically provided for, because the plan states that small right-of-ways are not considered in LUPs. They are analyzed on a case by case basis. One of the sites that would be affected by the proposed action is within the Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area. This area is managed with the Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area Resource Management Plan (1995) and an updated plan coming soon. This action would be in conformance with the management plans because the plans state that actions such as this are analyzed on a case by case basis with site specific NEPA as long as the proposed action is found to be consistent with the purposes of the National Conservation Area.

1.5 Relationship to Statutes, Regulations, and Other Requirements

The Department of Transportation promulgates standards for the transportation of fuels. Implementing the proposed action would allow the proponent to meet the required standards.

1.6 Scoping and Development of Issues

This proposed action was posted on the Internet through our NEPA log on July 29, 2008. Master Title Plats were researched to determine if there were potential conflicting uses, and internal specialists were consulted.

2.0 Description of Alternatives

2.1 Alternative A – No Action/Continue Current Management

Right-of-ways would not be granted to NPC for the cathodic protection stations. Existing CPS would continue to be used.

2.2 Alternative B – Grant right-of-ways for the proposed action

The proposed action would be to grant right-of-ways to NPC to upgrade two CPS sites and to install two new CPS sites. The upgrades are covered by IDI-14476 and IDI 31008. For IDI-14476, NPC needs to add additional anodes to an existing line. The upgrade would extend 135 feet in either direction from the end of the existing line. The right-of-way width for the expansion would be 50 feet. In addition, the width of the existing right-of-way would be expanded to 50 feet in order to allow for future maintenance. For IDI-31008, NPC needs to extend the existing anode line an additional 210 feet. A 50 foot width for the extension is needed. In addition, the existing right-of-way would be expanded to a 50 foot width.

The installation of the new sites would be covered by IDI-35880 and IDI-35881. For IDI-35880, NPC needs to install an anode line that extends 545 feet from the pipeline. For IDI-35881, NPC needs to install an anode line that extends 360 feet from the pipeline. Both of the new installations require a 50 foot width.

All of the CPS lines would be buried using heavy equipment. All existing vegetation within the 50 foot width of the right-of-way would be eliminated during installation. Stipulations would be attached to each grant that would make the holder responsible for restoration of each site including revegetation. The sites would be restored and revegetated after the CPS have been installed. The holder(s) of the right-of-ways would be responsible for short and long term control of any invasive, non-native weed species within the right-of way areas for the term of the grant.

For IDI-35880 a 7.2 kV distribution powerline that would be covered as an amendment to IDI-36023 held by Idaho Power would be needed to supply power to the station. This powerline would be aboveground on 45 foot poles and would be built to comply with the most recent standards outlined in *Suggested Practices for Raptor Protection on Powerlines, The State of the Art in 1996*, Edison Electric Institute/Raptor Research Foundation for raptor protection. The right-of-way for the powerline would be 2,100 feet in length and 40 feet in width.

3.0 Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences

3.1 Air Quality

3.1.1 Affected Environment – Air Quality

Air quality in a given area is described by the concentration of various pollutants in the atmosphere. National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) are established by the United States Environmental Protection Agency for criteria pollutants. These standards are generally expected to be met under the existing conditions in the area. Air quality in the area around Mountain Home is considered good due to the rural setting.

Consequently, ambient pollutant concentrations have rarely been monitored. Air quality in the area south of Boise is generally considered fair based on the proximity to a highly urbanized area. The nearest monitoring stations are located in Boise where particulate matter (PM10) and CO are of concern. Recent monitoring in the Treasure Valley area show two new pollutants of concern – fine particulate (PM2.5) and ozone.

3.1.2 Environmental Consequences – Air Quality

3.1.2.1 Alternative A

Air quality would not be impacted because no ground disturbing activities would occur. Conditions would remain the same over the long term relative to this action.

3.1.2.2 Alternative B

The construction phase of the project would produce two types of air contaminants: exhaust emissions from construction equipment and fugitive dust generated as a result of soil movement (particularly if soils are dry). These emissions, are, by their nature, of short-term duration and cease upon completion of the work. Exhaust emissions from construction equipment include those produced onsite as the construction equipment is used and, possibly, during transportation. The criteria pollutants emissions for construction include carbon monoxide, volatile organic compounds, nitrogen oxides, particulate matter, sulfur oxides, total suspended particles, hydrocarbons, and fine pollutants. Emissions from construction would be confined to daytime activity for the duration of the construction period.

Construction activities are a source of fugitive dust emissions that may have a small short-term effect on local air quality by slightly increasing PM10 levels. Emissions are associated with land clearing, ground excavation, and vehicle traffic.

Dust emissions vary substantially, from day to day, depending on the level of activity, the specific operations, and the prevailing weather. A large portion of the emissions would result from equipment traffic over dirt roads to the construction sites. The quantity of fugitive dust generated would be proportional to the area of land being worked and the level of construction activity. Emissions from construction operations are directionally proportional to the silt content of the soil (that is, particles smaller than 75 microns in diameter) and inversely proportional to the square of the soil moisture.

Due to the small disturbance areas for construction and the minimal pieces of heavy equipment utilized in the project it is anticipated that there would be negligible contribution to local or regional air quality degradation. Rehabilitation of the site including revegetation should prevent any dust beyond ambient levels in the future. This planted vegetation may not fully establish until the following spring, however, within two months the area should begin to receive precipitation and cooler temperatures which would keep the soil in place. Therefore, there would be minimal effects to air quality over a short time period and there should be no effects to air quality in the long term.

3.2 Vegetation, Special Status Plants, and Invasive, Non-native weed species

3.2.1 Affected Environment – Vegetation, special status plants, and Invasive, Non-native weed species

Three of the project areas, IDI-14476, IDI-35880, and IDI-35881 have experienced fires and, therefore, contain grasses (primarily cheatgrass) and weeds (annual mustards) characteristic of such areas. Area IDI-31008 has not burned and still contains a population of sagebrush with intermixed grasses and weeds.

Area IDI-31008 is within slickspot peppergrass (LEPA) Management Area 5B; however, the nearest recorded Element of Occurrence is 0.25 mile to the west. The on-the-ground survey by the environmental consultants showed that there were no LEPA plants or slickspots within the right-of-way areas. The other three sites were in the LEPA consideration zone; however, they were not in potential habitat and the consultants did not discover plants or habitat during their survey.

There are previously treated populations of invasive, non-native weed species (whitetop, Canada thistle, and Scotch thistle) 0.25 to 0.5 miles to the northeast of IDI-31008. The Boise District weeds database did not show previously treated weed population within one mile of the remaining sites; however, weeds are common and can spread rapidly at previously burned sites such as these.

3.2.2 Environmental Consequences – Invasive, Non-native weed species

3.2.2.1 Alternative A

Invasive non-native species would continue to populate the area at their current rate. Intact native vegetation would remain at IDI-31008.

3.2.2.2 Alternative B

Native and non-native vegetation that currently exists would be removed from the approximately 4 acres of right-of-ways over the short term. Desirable vegetation would become established in the disturbed areas approximately two growing seasons after the revegetation efforts have been completed. Invasive and noxious weeds would not be expected to occur in the area over the short or long term because of the weed control efforts required by the right of way stipulations. Desirable vegetation would be expected to dominate the right of way areas over the long term.

3.3 Threatened, Endangered, or Sensitive Animal Species

3.3.1 Affected Environment - Threatened, Endangered, or Sensitive Animal Species

An environmental contractor surveyed the sites and their report was reviewed by the BLM staff biologist. No Threatened, Endangered, or Sensitive (TES) animals, nests, breeding areas, or preferential habitat were found that would be disturbed by this action. The only sensitive species observed was a prairie falcon which was flying through the area. Because of historic and current disturbance within the right-of-way, many species that could potentially use the project areas may only be present because the habitat outside of the right-of-way was suitable and the pipeline corridor provides an open foraging area. There is also likely some use of the corridor by small non TES mammals. Following is a table for each site showing the nearest habitats of concern. The Conservation Data Center database showed that five special status species have been observed near the proposed right-of-ways.

IDI-31008	Merlin	1 mile NE
	Ferruginous Hawk	2 miles S
IDI-14476	Piute Ground Squirrel	2 miles SE
	Ferruginous Hawk	2.5 miles NE
IDI-35881	Ferruginous Hawk	1 mile W
	Mojave Black-collared	1.25 miles S
IDI-35880	Mountain Quail	1.25 miles NE

3.3.2 Environmental Consequences - Threatened, Endangered, or Sensitive Animal Species

3.3.2.1 Alternative A

The right-of-way areas would remain in their present state where the habitat is not suitable for breeding nor is it preferential for any of the special status species in the vicinity.

3.3.2.2 Alternative B

The temporary dust, noise, and presence of humans at the sites may discourage wildlife from using the areas for a couple of days. After the crew leaves, the sites would be rehabilitated. There should be no difference in wildlife use of the areas in the long-term since underground facilities and a small overhead powerline would not create a barrier to migration or any other significant change to the existing environment.

There would be a negligible potential for additional bird collisions and electrocutions with the powerline as compared to the other nearby powerlines. The powerline would be built to the latest standards to minimize raptor fatalities. Power poles provide attractive perch sites in areas where mature trees and other natural perches are lacking. Constructing power lines to standards in the *Suggested Practices for Raptor Protection on Powerlines, The State of the Art in 1996*, Edison Electric Institute/Raptor Research Foundation would minimize, but not eliminate, electrocution risk.

There would be no disruption to breeding of any of the special status species. The construction would take place in September and October while the animals of concern breed in the spring and early summer.

3.4 Cultural Resources

3.4.1 Affected Environment – Cultural Resources

BLM is responsible for managing public lands in a manner that preserves and protects cultural and historic resources. In furtherance of those responsibilities, BLM ensures that authorizations, including right-of-ways, comply with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the American Religious Freedom Act of 1978, the Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979, Executive Orders 11593 and 13007, and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990.

A contractor operating under a permit from the BLM State Office conducted an on the ground survey and found no cultural or historic resources at the proposed sites. This report was reviewed by a BLM staff Archeologist. The area has a low probability for cultural sites; therefore, impacts will not be analyzed.

Public lands within the project area are the ancestral homelands of the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes of the Duck Valley Reservation in Nevada. While surveys found no traditional cultural properties, the project area may have significance to the Shoshone-Paiute Tribe. Without further information, BLM makes no judgment as to the significance of current or historical tribal uses of this area. The tribes were consulted in the Wings and Roots session on July 17, 2008. The Tribes had no concern with the proposed project.

The Boise District uses a standard stipulation in right-of-ways that states a procedure for notification of and protection for any cultural resources discovered during construction.

3.5 Visual Resources

3.5.1 Affected Environment – Visual Resources

The CPS sites are all within Visual Resource Management (VRM) classes III and IV areas. Class III requires that the existing character of the landscape be partially maintained. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be moderate or less. Class IV allows BLM to provide for management activities which require major modification of the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape can be high.

3.5.2 Environmental Consequences – Visual Resources

3.5.2.1 Alternative A

Visual resources in the right-of-way areas would remain in their present state.

3.5.2.2 Alternative B

The CPS sites would be buried and the ground revegetated so there would be no impact to visual resources over the long term. The ground disturbing activity would be an acceptable short term activity given the VRM classes for the areas. The small powerline would be above ground, however it is a small spur on a larger powerline and the VRM class of the area is IV. Therefore, this action would be within compliance for the visual goals of the area.

3.6 Areas of Critical Environmental Concern

3.6.1 Affected Environment - Areas of Critical Environmental Concern

The right-of-way covered by IDI-35881 is within the boundary of the Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area (SRBOPNCA). SRBOPNCA was created for the conservation, protection, and enhancement of raptor populations and habitats. The Resource Management Plan for the SRBOPNCA states that projects such as this are allowable as long as they are compatible with the purposes for which it was created and site specific NEPA analysis is conducted.

3.6.2 Environmental Consequences – Areas of Critical Environmental Concern

3.6.2.1 Alternative A

The Area of Critical Environmental Concern would remain in its current state.

3.6.2.2 Alternative B

The right-of-way and resulting ground disturbance would total 0.41 acres. The area has also been burned in the past and therefore does not contain habitat that would be damaged by this action nor would it prevent future conservation, protection, or enhancement of habitat.

3.7 Public Safety

If Alternative A were chosen, NPC would be in violation of Department of Transportation standards and could face penalties. The pipeline would continue to corrode until a failure occurred. The health and safety of the public in the vicinity of a failed pipeline could be jeopardized as well as that of the cities whose service would be interrupted.

3.8 Cumulative Impacts

3.8.1 Scope of Analysis

For air quality the scope of analysis would be the area immediately downwind of each CPS site. Since the installation of a CPS site and a related powerline involves a relatively small area of ground disturbance we would consider that any dust should dissipate with 0.5 miles of each site.

For Non-native, invasive weed species the scope of analysis includes the actual right-of-way areas and all areas within a 0.5 mile radius. There should be no spread caused by the right-of-ways' use due to the weed control stipulation in the grant. For wildlife, the scope of analysis includes all areas within a 0.5 mile radius of each CPS site.

3.8.2 Environmental Consequences – Cumulative Impacts

3.8.2.1 Air Quality

There should be no cumulative effects to air quality. There would be no other ongoing projects that affect air quality in the vicinity of these CPS sites during construction. There could be future projects; however, they would occur after the CPS sites are revegetated. Additionally, the CPS sites and or adjacent areas experience fires frequently. Lack of vegetation from previous fires and future fires creates a higher level of dust and therefore lower air quality in the short and long term. The small amount of dust from the proposed project would be insignificant compared to naturally occurring dust due to wind erosion.

3.8.2.2 Threatened, Endangered, or Candidate Animal Species/Visual Resources

There should be no cumulative effects to threatened, endangered, or candidate animal species. There would be no other ongoing projects that effect threatened, endangered, or candidate animal species in the vicinity of these CPS sites during construction. After construction the revegetation with grass may provide a small amount of additional forage in the future for wildlife and cattle.

With the powerline there is a slight probability for an increase in raptor collisions, however, the lines and structures would be built to meet current standards for raptor safety. The affect of adding this small powerline is negligible compared to the existing large powerlines in the vicinity. The project is in a major utilities corridor. There is the potential for future utilities projects in the area. Most projects would only have short term construction impacts to wildlife. A future large powerline could have collision affects to birds; however, this project is negligible in size compared to potential future ones.

The effect of adding 2,100 feet of new aboveground distribution lines would not cumulatively affect the visual. Currently there are preliminary talks for a new 500kV powerline to be built in the general area, however, the likely sites for this powerline would be several miles away and the impacts from this project would be minor compared to the existing line and future line. There would also be a need to install another distribution line to power the site covered by IDI-35881 next summer. The effects of this line would also be minor due to its small size and short length compared to the larger lines in the area.

4.0 Consultation and Coordination

The Shoshone-Paiute Tribe was consulted through our Wings and Roots process. The Tribe did not have issues with the proposal.

4.1 List of Preparers

Michael Borkoski, Realty Specialist, Four Rivers Field Office
Paul Seronko, Environmental Protection Specialist,
Dean Shaw, Archaeologist,
Matt McCoy, NEPA Specialist,
Pat Kane, Weed Management Specialist
Jill Holderman, Wildlife Biologist
Mike Barnum, Rangeland Management Specialist,
Mark Steiger, Botanist,
Frank Jenks, Outdoor Recreation Planner,

4.2 List of Agencies, Organizations, and Individuals Consulted

Scott Patterson, Senior Land Representative, Northwest Pipeline Corporation, SLC, UT

4.3 Public Participation

The proposed action was placed on the BLM website for NEPA actions. No comments from the public were received.